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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine if significant attitudinal differences concerning evaluation by principals could be found between Mississippi's kindergarten teachers and other grade-level teachers immediately after administrators had evaluated teachers with the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments (MTAI). Designed to assess minimum teacher competencies, the MTAI evaluate teaching plans and materials, position skills, and interpersonal skills in the class. Before evaluation, every teacher in the state was provided with a copy of the MTAI and some level of staff development concerning evaluation prior to use of the MTAI. All administrators were prepared to implement the instruments through participation in extensive training sessions. A random sample of teachers was asked to judge aspects of their teacher evaluation conference and their evaluating administrator by completing the Supervisory Conference Rating Scale, a series of 24 descriptive scales. Of 285 responding teachers working in 13 school districts, 20 were kindergarten teachers; of these, 75 percent were white, and 25 percent black. Findings indicated that the attitudes of kindergarten teachers were more positive on several dimensions, but did not significantly differ from those of teachers at other grade levels. No kindergarten teacher failed the evaluation. Related materials, including a list of the MTAI competencies and Supervisory Conference Rating Scales, are provided. (RH)

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EFFECTIVE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN MISSISSIPPI

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The 1986-87 school year has been a year of demands on the educational system in the state of Mississippi. The time frame for the many mandates of the Education Reform Act passed by the Mississippi Legislature in 1982 produced changes in policy and practices in order to meet the new Performance Based Accreditation Standards, changes in the curriculum structure to meet the mandate of providing public kindergarten for all eligible five year olds and changes in teacher evaluation procedures through the use of the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments for the purpose of identifying teachers who are eligible for a $1000 salary encrement. (Educational Reform Act, 1982) All of these mandates were made in an effort to improve student achievement based on the theory that effective teachers produce high achieving students.

Recent studies have been made using the Supervisory Conference Rating Scale (Blackbourn-1983, Hemphill-1984 and Moody and Blackbourn-1978) in order to study the relationship between teacher's preceptions of supervisory behavior, leadership behavior and variables such as race, gender, age, degree level and years of experience and their attitudes toward a post evaluative conference. It was felt that the use of this conference instrument, after the initial evaluation using the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments, would bring one more variable to the research--proficiency.

The proficiency scale used for the MTAI was a minimal level of performance set to determine the effectiveness of the classroom teacher being evaluated. Intense pressure was placed on the teacher to meet this level, not only to provide effectiveness, but also to obtain the $1000 raise to be received by each teacher meeting proficiency as required by the personnel appraisal process.

Statement of the Problem

The problem in this study was to determine whether there were significant differences in the mean attitudinal scores of kindergarten teachers and other teachers toward the post evaluative conference with principals after completion of the classroom visitations utilizing the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments (MTAI).

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no significant difference in mean scores of kindergarten and other teachers on the post evaluation conference with administrators as measured by overall attitude.

2. There will be no significant difference in mean scores of kindergarten and other teachers on the post evaluation conference with administrators as measured by attitudes toward administrator's characteristics subscale.

3. There will be no significant difference in mean scores of kindergarten and other teachers on the post evaluation conference with administrators as measured by attitudes toward climate of conference subscale.

Procedures

The Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments were used during the eighth through fifteenth weeks of school to assess the effectiveness of all teachers in the state. The model adopted from the Georgia Teacher Assessment Instrument uses sixteen competencies to evaluate Teaching Plans and Materials (TPM), Position Skills (PS) and Interpersonal Skills (IS) in the classroom. The sixteen competencies evaluated by the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments are found in Appendix A.

Every teacher in the state was provided a copy of the instruments and some level of staff development concerning the evaluation prior to their use. All administrators were prepared to implement the instruments through participation in extensive training sessions under the direction of MTAI trainers and had to meet a set level of proficiency before being allowed to use the MTAI.

A random sample of teachers around the state was asked to respond through the Supervisory Conference Rating Scale to the post conference following the use of the MTAI. These teachers were to complete the scale immediately following the post conference and seal the results in an envelope. The principal then marked the envelope as to whether or not that teacher had met proficiency on the MTAI. The teachers responded to the conference and the administrator by judging the conference against a series of 24 descriptive scales. The scales were divided into two factors; Factor I, describing the environment of the conference and Factor II, characterizing the personal behaviors of the leader during the conference.

Of the 285 teachers who responded, 20 were kindergarten teachers. The total sample of kindergarten teachers was female of which 75 percent were white and 25 percent were black. The range of years of experience was from zero to thirteen years. The age of the sample ranged from 22 to 47 of which 60 percent were 35 and younger and 35 percent 36 and older. Of the sample studied, 5 percent had an AAA level of preparation, 25 percent had an AA level of preparation and 60 percent had an A level of preparation. Ten percent did not tell their level of preparation.

Treatment of Data

Teacher attitudes toward the post evaluative conference were assessed through the use of the Supervisory Conference Rating Scale. (Appendix B) Two subscale scores of the instrument, as well as the total score, were employed as dependent variables. The first subscale was related to the environment displayed in the evaluation conference as perceived by the teacher. (Appendix C) The second subscale assessed teacher perceptions of the behaviors of the principal during the conference. (Appendix D)

The total sample consisted of 285 teachers working in 13 school districts. Twenty of this number were teaching in kindergarten and 265 were teaching at higher grade levels.

Data were analyzed through the use of analysis of variance. The .05 level of significance was employed for testing the null hypotheses.

Findings

The results of the first evaluation using the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments demonstrated that 98 percent of the teachers in Mississippi were found effective. No kindergarten teachers in the State of Mississippi were reported to have failed the evaluation.

Analysis of the data from the Supervisory Conference Relating Scale showed that all three null hypotheses which respectively predicted no significant difference in mean attitudinal scores between the kindergarten teacher and other teachers on the three measures were not rejected. No significant differences were found in the attitudes of the kindergarten teachers and teachers at other grade levels. It was noted, however, that kindergarten teachers expressed more positive attitudes toward the characteristics of the administrators, the climate of the conference and the overall experience than did the other teachers. Though these higher attitudinal ratings for the kindergarten teachers were not statistically significant, these data show a trend toward their more professional acceptance of the overall evaluation experience. (See Table I)

It was also noted that none of the kindergarten teachers for whom data were reported failed the evaluation, whereas 10.5% of the other teachers participating in this study failed.

Implications of the Study and Future Directions

One advantage that the kindergarten teachers may have had over the other Mississippi teachers, when using the sixteen competencies of the Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments, was that these competencies were also found for the most part in the list of responsibilities for the teaching personnel in the statewide kindergarten program.

As listed in the TBR some of the kindergarten teacher's responsibilities should be:

1. Model the kindergarten program in accordance with the needs and abilities of the individual child. (TBR , p. 5 and MTAI Competencies 2 and 3)

2. Believe in and implement a learning environment in the classroom which emphasizes the discovery approach to learning through the use of learning centers (TBR, p. 5)

3. Recognize the individual needs of children enrolled in the program and seek the appropriate services to assist in providing the best care and education possible for the child. (TBR, p. 5 and MTAI Competencies 2, 3 and 7)

4. Provide the appropriate educational situations to allow decision making and challenges to occur in the classroom which will promote the maturation of the child in all areas of development. (TBR, p. 5)

5. Recognize the need for close attention to the parent(s) and their influence on their child's educational experiences. (TBR, p.)5

6. Maintain the ability to be an imaginative and creative teacher who can be flexible in planning and scheduling as the need is indicated. (TBR, p. 5 and MTAI Competencies 4, 5, 7 and 10)

7. Interpret the kindergarten operation to the school administration as well as the parent(s) and community in general. (TBR, p. 5)

8. Maintain good physical and mental health to insure the ability to function with the vitality necessary to work effectively with young children. (TBR, p. 5)

9. Understand the characteristics of the kindergarten child and plan a program accordingly. (TBR, p. 5 and MTAI Competencies 1 and 9)

10. Maintain an interest in continued professional growth through self-study, staff development training, continued education, and participation in professional organizations. (TBR and MTAI Competencies 14 and 15)

11. Maintain an instructional repertoire that demonstrates a variety of teaching methods. (TBR and MTAI Competency 7)

12. Demonstrate appropriate classroom management techniques. (TBR and MTAI Competency 10)

Kindergarten teachers are trained in the college early childhood education program as well as through staff development to meet the needs of the student through these philosophically sound principles. As stated in the Mississippi Kindergarten Program Philosophy - "With the teacher as the facilitator the learning tasks should be sequenced, taking into account developmental levels of the students. Instructional techniques promote active participation by the learner with the teacher serving as chief architect in planning, evaluating, and deciding the program direction, as well as delivering the information to the child through interactions with the teacher, with peers, and with the environment through varied activities." (Teachers Resource Book, p. V) Kindergarten teachers must use the majority of the sixteen competencies daily in order to support this philosophy.

In the March, 1987, issue of the Phi Delta Kappen, Ms. Sandra Longfellow Robinson presented the five major trends in the education of 5 year-olds in America. These five trends are:

1. More children are being offered the opportunity to attend public kindergarten.

2. More local and less state funding and control of kindergarten programs are being reported.

3. More 5 year-olds are attending school for more hours each day in the 1980s than in the 1970s.

4. More hiring of teachers in the kindergarten program with more years of education.

5. More states are requiring compulsory school attendance at age 5.

Mississippi, with the exception of compulsory school attendance at age 5, has supported all of the trends. But this state has added one more that could possibly be the most important aspect of the total early childhood program - effective teachers. Mississippi can proudly boast that its kindergarten teachers can and do teach effectively.

Table 1

Comparison of Attitudes of Kindergarten Teachers and Higher Grade Teachers Toward the Post Evaluative Conference with Administrators

Criteria	Kindergarten N	Kindergarten $\bar{X}$	Kindergarten SD	Higher Grades N	Higher Grades $\bar{X}$	Higher Grades SD	F
Attidudes toward Administrator's Characteristics	20	92.60	6.82	265	88.05	13.91	2.10
Attitudes toward Climate of Conference	20	65.20	6.08	265	63.23	9.72	.80
Overall Attitudes	20	157.80	12.06	265	151.28	23.33	1.53

F 3.83 (1,283) needed for significance at .05 level

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MISSISSIPPI TEACHING COMPETENCIES

MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

COMPETENCY I:	Plans instruction to achieve selected objectives.
COMPETENCY II:	Organizes instruction to take into account individual differences among learners.
COMPETENCY III:	Obtains and uses information about the needs and progress of individual learners.
COMPETENCY IV:	Obtains and uses information about the effectiveness of instruction to revise it when necessary.
COMPETENCY V:	Uses instructional techniques, methods, and media related to the objectives.
COMPETENCY VI:	Communicates with learners.
COMPETENCY VII:	Demonstrates a repertoire of teaching methods.
COMPETENCY VIII:	Reinforces and encourges learner involvement in instruction.
COMPETENCY IX:	Demonstrates an understanding of the school subject being taught and demonstrates its relevance.
COMPETENCY X:	Organizes time, space, materials and equipment for instruction.
COMPETENCY XI:	Demonstrates high expections for learners' academic performance.
COMPETENCY XII:	Demonstrates enthusiam for teaching and learning and the subject being taught.
COMPETENCY XIII:	Helps learners develop positive self-concepts.
COMPETENCY XIV:	Manages classroom interactions.
COMPETENCY XV:	Meets professional responsibilities.
COMPETENCY XVI:	Engages in professional self-development.

MISSISSIPPI TEACHER ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

1. Teaching Plans and Materials (TPM)	COMPETENCIES: I-IV	INDICATORS: 1-12
2. Position Skills (PS)	COMPETENCIES: V-XI	INDICATORS: 13-32
3. Interpersonal Skills (IS)	COMPETENCIES: XII-XIV	INDICATORS: 33-42

APPENDIX B

SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE RATING SCALE

Teacher Data

Sex_____ Race_____ Years of Experience_____

Age_____ Level of Preparation: A____; AA____; AAA____; AAAA____

Current Teaching Position_____
(Principal, junior high math, high school English, elementary librarian, etc.)

Principal Data

Sex_____ Race_____ Years of Experience_____

Age_____ Level of Preparation: A____; AA____; AAA____; AAAA____

The purpose of this study is to measure the perceptions of teachers and administrators of the supervisory conference by having them judge the conference against a series of descriptive scales. In taking this test, please make your judgements on the basis of what the items mean to you.

Here is how you are to use these scales:

If you feel that the concept at the top of page 3 is very closely related to one end of the scale, you should place your check mark as follows:

Pleasant__X__:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____Unpleasant

or

Pleasant_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:__X__Unpleasant

If you feel that the concept is quite closely related to one or the other end of the scale (but not extremely), you should place your check-mark as follows:

Pleasant_____:__X__:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____Unpleasant

or

Pleasant_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:__X__:_____Unpleasant

If the concept seems only slightly related to one side as opposed to the other side (but is not really neutral), then you should check as follows:

Pleasant____:____:_X_:____:____:____:____Unpleasant

or

Pleasant____:____:____:____:_X_:____:____Unpleasant

The direction toward which you check, of course, depends upon which one of the ends of the scale seems most characteristic of the thing you're judging.

If you consider the concept to be neutral on the scale, both sides of the scale equally associated with the concept, or if the scale is completely irrelevant, unrelated to the concept, then you should place your check-mark in the middle space.

Pleasant____:____:____:_X_:____:____:____Unpleasant

IMPORTANT: (1) Place your check-marks in the middle of the spaces, not on the boundaries:

____:____:____:_X_:____:____:____

(2) Be sure you check every scale for every concept--do not omit any.

(3) Never put more than one check-mark on a single scale.

Sometimes you may feel as though you've had the same item before on the test. This will not be the case, so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the test. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at fairly high speed through the test. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impressions, the immediate "feelings" about the items, that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

APPENDIX B

SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE RATING SCALE

Bipolar Adjectives
Possible Range = 1 - 7

Item No.			
1	Unpleasant	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Pleasant
2	Chaotic	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Ordered
3	Superficial	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Profound
4	Meaningless	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Meaningful
5	Hazy	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Clear
6	Emotional	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Rational
7	Insincere	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Sincere
8	Remote	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Intimate
9	Vague	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Precise
10	Uncertain	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Definite
11	Violent	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Gentle
12	Dishonest	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Honest
13	Unfair	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Fair
14	Agitated	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Calm
15	Worthless	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Valuable
16	Autocratic	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Democratic
17	Uncertain	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Confident
18	Aloof	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Responsive
19	Harsh	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Kindly
20	Apathetic	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Alert
21	Evading	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Responsible
22	Excitable	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Poised
23	Disorganized	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Organized
24	Inflexible	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Adaptable

APPENDIX C

Factor I

SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE RATING SCALE

SUB - SCALE I

Bipolar Adjectives Possible Range = 1 - 7	
2. Chaotic	Ordered
3. Superficial	Profound
4. Meaningless	Meaningful
6. Emotional	Rational
9. Vague	Precise
16. Autocratic	Democratic
17. Uncertain	Confident
18. Aloof	Responsive
19. Harsh	Kindly
20. Apathetic	Alert
21. Evading	Responsible
22. Excitable	Poised
23. Disorganized	Organized
24. Inflexible	Adaptable

APPENDIX D

Factor II

SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE RATING SCALE

SUB - SCALE II

Bipolar Adjectives Possible Range = 1 - 7	
1. Unpleasant	Pleasant
5. Hazy	Clear
7. Insincere	Sincere
8. Remote	Intimate
10. Uncertain	Definite
11. Violent	Gentle
12. Dishonest	Honest
13. Unfair	Fair
14. Agitated	Calm
15. Worthless	Valuable